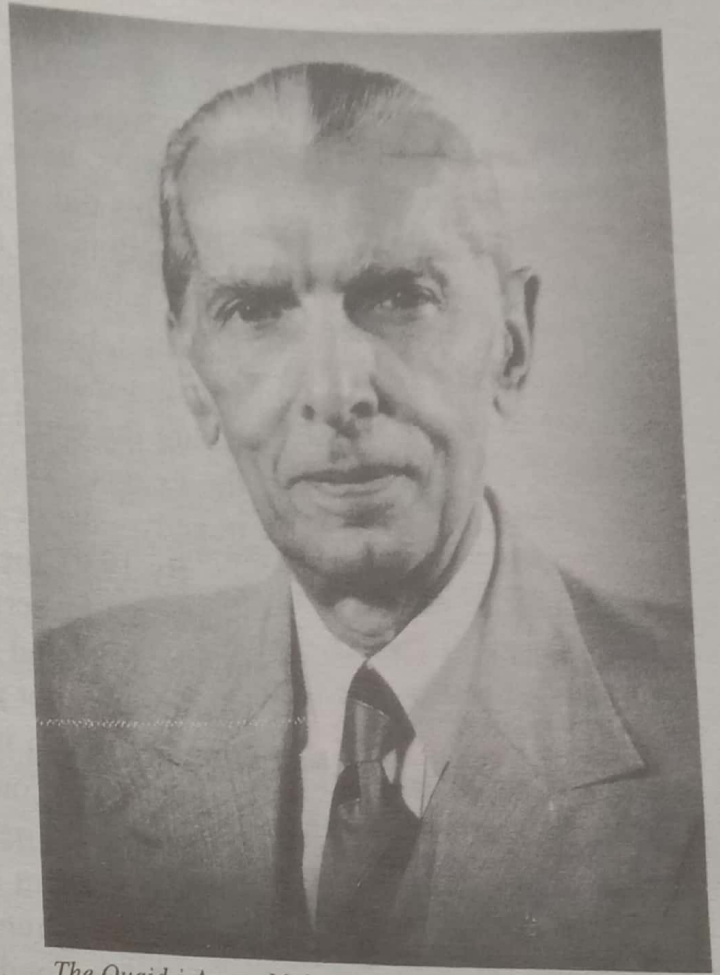


Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah (1876-1948)

Muhammad Ali Jinnah was born in Karachi on 25 December 1876. He was born into a trading family from Gujarat that had settled in

Karachi. There was little in his family background that suggested that he would be the father of a nation. However, from a young age, Jinnah showed confidence and intelligence and was sent to England at the age of 15 to study law. After completing his legal studies at the age of 18, Jinnah had to stay on another two years so that he was of an age to be officially called to the Bar. He now developed an interest in politics by watching debates in the House of Commons in London and helped in the election of an Indian to Parliament.

He returned to Karachi at the age of 20, one of the youngest lawyers in the subcontinent, to set up practice in Bombay. Within a few years, he had made a name for himself as one of the best and brightest barristers in Bombay. He charged more than others but clients happily paid knowing the professional dedication and integrity with which he worked and of his excellent record of winning cases. One rich client tried to pay him more than the agreed fee and was coldly sent the extra amount back. In his personal life, Jinnah was married in 1918 to the daughter of a Parsee businessman. His new wife, Ruttie, converted to Islam. The following year, a daughter, Dina, was born.



The Quaid-i-Azam, Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

In 1909, Jinnah made his first formal entry into politics as a member of the Imperial Legislative Council where he soon made a favourable impression. By chance, one of the first motions on which Jinnah had to debate was a resolution debating the treatment of Indians living in South Africa, led by another barrister named Mohandas Gandhi. Jinnah also joined the Muslim League in 1913 but like many Muslims, felt that there was no contradiction at this stage in being a member of both the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League.

Cooperation between the Muslim League and Congress continued. At the end of 1915, they agreed to hold their end of year rallies in Bombay, largely at Jinnah's initiative. The experiment was not, however, a success as the Muslim League meetings were regularly interrupted and the police refused to intervene. By 1916, Jinnah was one of the leading figures in the increasingly active independence movement. He was tipped by many as the perfect example of a person who was respected and admired by both Hindus and Muslims. In Lucknow, that same year, Jinnah negotiated with the Congress to iron out a pact which would lead to a common policy in dealing with the British.

Jinnah resigned from the Executive Council in 1919 in protest at the passing of the infamous Rowlatt Act, which was designed to crush any anti-British activity. Over the next few years, he gradually broke with Congress. The adoption of more Hindu slogans and the gradual growth of Gandhi's influence alienated Jinnah from the Congress. In 1921, when the Congress

backed out of the separate electorates agreed in 1916, the road was set for a confrontation. At Nagpur in the same year, Gandhi had proposals passed which finally persuaded Jinnah to leave the Congress, never to return as a member.

This did not mean that Jinnah gave up on the idea of reconciling the Muslim and Hindu communities so that they could work towards independence. In 1928, at the Congress session at Calcutta, he tried to reach a compromise on separate electorates in Muslim-majority areas but the Nehru Report in that year effectively meant the end to political cooperation between the Congress and the League. This bitter political news was followed by a personal tragedy—the death of his wife of tuberculosis in 1928.

By 1930, the political situation in India depressed Jinnah so much that he seriously considered settling in England. He was invited to attend the Round Table Conference in London in that year but did not return to the subcontinent. He had almost faded from politics in the subcontinent, although he did attend another Round Table Conference in 1931, where he was joined by Gandhi. Jinnah tried to persuade the Congress-nominated Muslims to unite with the Muslim League. He was disillusioned enough not to attend the third conference in 1932. He was regularly visited at his comfortable London home by Muslim visitors, including Allama Iqbal. The major topic of conversation was the sad state of the Muslim League, which had almost collapsed. Some of its leaders had died, while others, like Jinnah, had moved abroad.

Jinnah received another group of visitors from the subcontinent in July 1933. They were Liaquat Ali Khan, later to be the first prime minister of Pakistan, and his new wife. Liaquat tried to convince Jinnah to return to the subcontinent. Although all efforts by the newly-married couple seemed to fail, Liaquat eventually received a promise that when he went back to India, he should judge the situation and then ask Jinnah to return if he thought fit. When in late 1933, Liaquat Ali Khan sent the message 'Return', Jinnah did exactly that.

In April 1934, Jinnah was sworn in as the life president of the Muslim League and re-entered the Central Assembly again to use his skill as a parliamentarian. Jinnah, however, realized that the Muslim League had to go beyond the well-educated and wealthy Muslims, who were its main members and supporters, and appeal to the Muslim masses. It was not until the 1937 provincial elections that Jinnah was tested in the electoral field. The first experience was sobering as the Muslim League did not perform as well as it had hoped. It won many seats in areas where the

Muslims were in a minority but did not do at all well in Muslim-majority areas, where regional parties performed far better. Jinnah learned from this experience and in future, the Muslim League was to appeal to all Muslims, not just those Muslims who lived in areas where Hindus predominated. It was no coincidence, therefore, that Lahore was chosen as the venue from which the Muslim League was to demand a separate Muslim homeland in March 1940.

With hindsight, the fact that the Congress did so well in the 1937 elections was to prove to be a future blessing for the League. Congress refused to share power in areas even where the Muslim League had received a large proportion of the Muslim votes. This fact, coupled with the arrogance with which Congress ruled, gave the Muslim League invaluable evidence of the fate of Muslims when and if the British were to leave. Jinnah wisely chose not to publicly criticize non-Muslim League leaders in the Punjab and Bengal for the sake of Muslim unity and concentrated instead on the Congress Party. The strategy was not only wise, it was also successful. Muslim League membership rose from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands, peaking at two million in 1947. Jinnah was now known as the 'Quaid-i-Azam', the great leader. He was the undisputed leader of the Muslim community and recognized reluctantly as such by the Congress and the British.

The outbreak of the Second World War also helped Jinnah as the Congress Party directed its ministers to resign from their posts. The Muslim League said it would not discourage Muslims from joining the army if the British promised the Muslims a fair hearing once the war was over. With the resignation of the Congress ministries, Jinnah asked all Muslims to celebrate a 'Day of Deliverance' as the humiliating practices of the various Congress ministers were no longer inflicted on them. The Congress was shocked to discover that this call was almost universally heeded. Gandhi now tried to woo Jinnah by addressing him as the 'Quaid-i-Azam' and trying to extract a reassurance that he would not press for a separate Muslim homeland. Jinnah replied categorically that India was not a nation—'it is a subcontinent composed of nationalities'.

March 1940 saw the final stage unfold. The 'Pakistan Resolution' declared that a 'sovereign and separate Muslim state' was now the formal Muslim League demand. Jinnah's political strength, with the obvious popularity that he and the Muslim League now enjoyed, meant that the British could not contemplate leaving the subcontinent without a settlement acceptable to him. In 1944, the Muslim League had two million members and in by-elections between 1937 and 1943, the League won 47 out of 61 seats. The final attempt by the British to broker a deal before leaving was in the summer of 1945 at Simla. The talks broke down but it was obvious to both the Hindus and the British that Jinnah could not be threatened or bought. The Muslim masses loved and trusted him even though he made most of his speeches in English, a language few understood. His combination of honesty and firmness meant he would not be sidetracked and his superb legal mind saw the possible traps and weaknesses of his opponents.

Pakistan was within sight as the war ended and frantic political activity saw Jinnah winning crucial concessions from both the Congress and the British for an independent and sovereign Muslim state. In return, Jinnah had to agree to the partition of the Punjab and Bengal into Muslim and Hindu districts. On 7 August 1947, Jinnah flew from Delhi to Karachi, the new capital of the state he had created. Before stepping onto the plane, he was reported to have paused and looked around at the city, the city from where the Muslims had ruled the subcontinent for almost 700 years. The Quaid wondered aloud whether it would be his last ever

look at Delhi. That was indeed to be the case. Huge crowds at Karachi received him jubilantly and lifted his spirits. He entered the governor-general's residence as the first governor-general of Pakistan.

The celebrations and ceremonies planned for 14 August were being carried out against a backdrop of horrific violence and bloodshed. The Quaid tried his best to reassure minorities of their protection in the state of Pakistan. He urged the entire country to look forward to the future after all the bitterness of recent events. Jinnah tried to persuade Hindus, Sikhs and Christians to stay on in Pakistan as they had nothing to fear from the Muslim population.

As governor-general, Jinnah was primarily concerned with trying to keep the administration running and was concerned with the Kashmir dispute which had broken out just a month after the independence of India and Pakistan. With such problems facing the new state, it is hardly surprising that it took its toll on the health of the Quaid. He had known for many years that he was dying of tuberculosis but had kept that fact a secret and carried on as if he was in good health. Jinnah suggested to Lord Mountbatten in September 1947 that as the governor-general of India, Mountbatten should fly to Lahore where both of them would have complete power to resolve the Kashmir issue. The Indian government refused and the Quaid spent most of the end of 1947 in severe pain due to failing health. By April 1948, he was too ill to remain in the humidity of Karachi. He moved to Ziarat, a hill station near Quetta, where he took his work with him. On 11 September, he was moved back to Karachi, which he reached with difficulty as his ambulance from the airport broke down and another had to be found. That night, the Quaid-i-Azam passed away in the governor-general's residence, leaving a nation orphaned and stunned.

Muhammad Ali Jinnah was a unique character in the series of people who contributed to the protection and safeguarding of Muslim interests. He was not a great writer or thinker; he was not a warrior or soldier; nor was he a king or a religious figure. He was simply a brilliant and dedicated advocate who decided to fight the biggest case of his life against the most difficult court in the world. He did not do it for money or fame, as he had both before deciding on this struggle; in his will, he donated his vast wealth to Muslim universities and colleges. Although all Pakistanis regret that he did not live long enough to secure a constitutional basis for the nation, it should be remembered that but for his determination, he should not have survived as long as he did and Pakistan may never have been born.